

IN THE CLAIMS

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1. (original) A method of audio signal handling, comprising the steps of receiving a compression encoded audio signal and compression decoding the compression encoded audio signal to produce a decoded audio signal, characterised in that the method further comprises: deriving an auxiliary data signal relating to the compression encoded audio signal; communicating the auxiliary data signal together with the decoded audio signal and re-encoding the decoded audio signal utilising information from the auxiliary data signal.
2. (original) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the auxiliary data signal comprises all or part of the encoded audio signal.
3. (original) A method according to Claim 2, wherein the auxiliary data signal comprises audio-related data from the encoded audio signal.
4. (original) A method according to Claim 3, wherein the auxiliary data signal comprises time information from the encoded audio signal.
5. (currently amended) A method according to Claim 4, wherein the auxiliary data signal further comprises ~~ancillary information, such as~~ program-associated data from the encoded audio signal.

6. (currently amended) A method of audio signal handling, comprising the steps of receiving a compression encoded audio signal which signal is compression encoded based on analysis and quantisation decisions, and compression decoding the compression encoded audio signal to produce a decoded audio signal, characterised by the further steps of: deriving an auxiliary data signal indicative of the analysis and quantisation decisions employed for the compression encoded audio signal; communicating the auxiliary data signal together with the decoded audio signal and re-encoding the decoded audio signal utilising information from the auxiliary data signal to produce a re-encoded audio signal employing the same analysis and quantisation as the encoded audio signal.

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7. (original) A method according to Claim 6, wherein the analysis comprises application of a sub-band filter bank.

8. (original) A method according to Claim 7, wherein the auxiliary data signal is indicative of the frequency analysis into sub-bands and the method of quantisation within each sub-band employed for the encoded audio signal frequency.

9. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the encoded audio signal is an MPEG audio coded signal.

10. (original) A method according to Claim 9, wherein the auxiliary data signal contains information relating to one or more of: the position of audio frame boundaries in the encoded audio signal; frequency sub-bands; scale factors for the sub-bands within each audio

frame of the encoded audio signal; bit allocation data for each audio frame of the encoded audio signal.

11. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the auxiliary data signal is combined with the decoded audio signal for communication along a common signal path with the decoded audio signal.

12. (original) A method according to Claim 11, wherein the auxiliary data signal is formatted to enable an integrity check prior to use of the auxiliary data signal in a re-encoding process, to ensure transparent communication of the auxiliary data signal along a decoded audio signal path.

13. (original) A method according to Claim 11, wherein the auxiliary data signal is carried in the least significant bits of a digital decoded audio signal.

14. (original) A method according to Claim 11, wherein the auxiliary data signal is carried as user data bits in a recognized digital interface format.

15. (original) A method according to Claim 11, wherein the auxiliary data signal is carried in the upper part of the audio spectrum.

16. (original) A method according to Claim 15, wherein the auxiliary data signal is carried in higher frequencies associated with sub-bands unused in the compression encoding.

17. (original) A method according to Claim 16, in which MPEG audio coding is employed, wherein a filter arrangement analogous to the MPEG analysis sub-band filter arrangement and its reciprocal, is employed for insertion of the auxiliary data signal into the decoded audio signal.

18. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the auxiliary data signal is carried in a separate path to the decoded audio signal.

19. (currently amended) A method according to Claim 18, wherein the auxiliary data signal path is disabled for independent re-encoding, in the event of processing of the decoded audio signal not being substantially transparent, thereby inhibiting sensible use of information from the auxiliary data signal in re-encoding.

20. (currently amended) A method according to Claim 19, wherein a tell-tale subsidiary auxiliary data signal is added to the decoded audio signal indicative of such processing.